



Battle Cry



Vol. 43 No. 3 March 2003 Newsletter of Sacramento Civil War Round Table

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was very impressed with the presentation at our Feb. meeting. It shows that sometimes the best presentations are those from our own members. Thanks to Jim Harper and Don Hayden . Also, I was very impressed with the comments of our members. I should have given more time for comments.

This month I have included the article "What If the South Had Won the Civil War by William S. Lind. This article was attached to a California Republican Newsletter to stimulate thought. It was referred to in three different articles in the Sac Bee and on the local 5:00 news.

I attached it for two reasons. One, it shows how Civil War themes keep reoccurring in today's world and two, because it shows a point of view. I won't comment on the accuracy of the article but remind you that the end of the U.S. Civil War did not result in only one Constitutional Amendment but three. With the passage of the 13th Amendment, we had 4 million people who were no longer slaves but not citizens

either. How would this have been resolved in the confederacy?

This month's speaker is Bob Bundy who will speak on the U. S. Postal Service during the Civil War. I know many of you have served in the military or been wives or girl friends back home. You have first had experience with the importance of mail from loved ones.

What If the South Had Won the Civil War?

By William S. Lind

CNS Commentary from the "Next Revolution"

Television Program - 8 July, 1999.

If the South had won the Civil War, where might our two countries be today? It is of course impossible to know, and as someone who proudly wears his great-grandfather's G.A.R. ring-he served in the 88th and 177th Ohio Volunteers, and his diary records the monitors bombarding Fort Fisher as he watched from a Union transport-I'm not entirely comfortable asking the question. But given how bad things have gotten in the old U.S.A., it's not hard to believe that history might have taken a better turn. Slavery of course would be long gone, for economic reasons. Race relations today in the Old South, in rural areas and cities such as Charleston, South Carolina, are generally better than they are in northern cities, so we might have done all right on that score. When southerners say they have a special relationship with blacks based on many

generations of living together at close quarters, they have a point. The real damage to race relations in the south came not from slavery, but from Reconstruction, which would not have occurred if the South had won. And since the North would have been a separate nation, the vast black migration to northern cities that took place during World War II might not have happened.

Certainly Southerners would not be living under the iron rule of an all-powerful federal government, as we all do now. Northerners might not be, either; a Union defeat would have given states' rights a boost in both countries. The Tenth Amendment might still have the force of law even up north. It is possible that both countries might still be republics, instead of a single empire. That transformation traces to America's entry into World War I, which might not have happened. Southern sympathy would probably have been with Britain and France, but the North, with a large German population, might well have lined up with the Kaiser (the Irish would have liked that, too).

No American entry into the war would have meant no Communism in Russia and no Hitler in Germany. That's not a bad bargain. It is highly unlikely that the Confederacy would have embraced the cultural Marxism of Political Correctness that is fast becoming the official American state ideology. So at least part of North America would still stand for Western culture, Christianity and an appreciation of the differences between ladies and gentlemen. Decency might have taken its stand in Dixie, along with some other good things such as an appreciation for the merits of rural life. Perhaps most important, Americans north and south might have a choice. If the North had turned left, as the United States has during this century, Northerners who didn't care for that development could cross the Mason Dixon line and become Southerners. That's an option more than a few of us Yankees would appreciate having, even if it did mean having to eat grits. What would my great-grandfather, Union Army sergeant

Alfred G. Sturgiss, say to all of this? If he could see the sorry mess the country he fought for has become, I think he might sadly say that he'd fought for the wrong side.

Bill Lind is director of the Free Congress Foundation's Center for Cultural Conservatism, and is the co-host of the television program "Next Revolution".

Submitted by Dennis Kohlmann

Book Review by Jon Courtway

Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam
by James M. McPherson. 203 pages, plus
Notes and Bibliographical Essays
Copyright 2002; Hardback \$26.00 or \$20.50
History Book Club]

Howard Sussman's review said that it was a "terrific read, mainly because it explains the importance of this battle to all the other peripheral issues of the war."

Those issues being that the victory restored morale in the North, ended Confederate hopes of British and French intervention, kept Lincoln's party in control of Congress, and allowed Lincoln to deliver the Emancipation Proclamation that changed the character of the war from preserving the old Union to preserving freedom for all peoples of the United States.

The book is easy to read, accessible, and recommended for purchase.

In particular, I enjoyed McPherson's ability to weave the battle field tactics with the social and political influences into a seamless narrative.

This volume is part of a new series called Pivotal Moments in American History and the problem of historical contingency. One may take the point of view that there were several turning points in the Civil War where if the war may have been ended earlier, or may have led to a Southern victory.

MINUTES

SACRAMENTO CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

Wednesday, February 26, 2003

Sizzler Restaurant, 2030 Fulton Avenue, Sacramento

Attendance – 39

Members – 32

Dennis Kohlmann, Pres. Carol Breiter
Kit Knight, Vice Pres. Steve Breiter
George Foxworth, Treas. Glyen Brown
Walt Bittle, Sec. Ardith Cnota
Dudley Albrecht Mitch Cnota
Jim Armstrong Bill Donaldson
Bob Baskerville Lydia Donaldson
Roy Bishop Alan Geiken

Jim Harper
Don Hayden
Russ Knauer
Gatha Lee
Earl Martin
Virginia Martin
Betty Mitchell
Maurice Mitchell

Bev Passerello
John Passerello
Natalie Schafer
Rudy Schafer
Brad Schall
Andrew Sneeringer
Bob Williams
Susan Williams

Guests – 7

Chuck Gibbs
LuAnn Higgs
Jim Lane
Mary Muttera
Ted Swanson
Jim Taff
Will Williford

1. The meeting was called to order by President Kohlmann, who reviewed this day in history. Guests and new members were introduced and welcomed. The minutes of January 29 were approved as printed.

2. Program – In a variation on our regular programming, members Don Hayden and Jim Harper engaged in a “Point – Counterpoint” kind of discussion. The National Battlefield Parks have been charged by Congress to include some mention of slavery as at least one cause of the Civil War in their visitor information. Don Hayden spoke in opposition to the proposed new rules. Jim Harper then spoke in favor of the new interpretation. Both speakers distributed position papers and helped with a lively group discussion.

3. It was announced that Brad Schall will present the May program about Kansas and John Brown. Others were encouraged to volunteer for future programs.

4. Adjournment

Following the raffle, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30.

Walt Bittle

Secretary

Treasurer’s Report

The cash balance following the meeting of February 26 was \$1904.47.
Thanks to members and guests, the raffle brought in \$52.

George Foxworth

Treasurer

MINERVA, 1818

My momma be born a slave;
I be born a slave, but
master, he be a good man,
he don't beat me and
Colonel Murray, he say
now I be his
colored servant. I still
fetch; but deys a lot o truth
in hope. The colonel, he say
go see about them people
on my road. Them babies
--even fo white chillun--
they pale, sittin'
way up dar on top
o dat big ol wagon. That boy,
not a bit o bad on his face,
but he be so skinny his shadow
be havin' holes. That boy,
he say, "My name is Abe Lincoln
and this is my sister, Sarah;
we're going to Indiana
where the land is free
and the corn grows
like it had wings." Dats nice,
I think, but right now
it be more important
to feed 'em. I brung
buttered corn bread
and mugs o milk; wipin'
his mouf, little Abe say,
"It's right good you are
to us, ma'am. Thank you.
I hope I can do something
for you someday."

Minerva, 1863

It been more'n 40 years
since I fed those skinny
chillun. Poor Miss Sarah,
she be dead; but little Abe,
he be all growed up.
President Lincoln, he write
a big paper called
Emancipation.

--Kit Knight

Gettysburg

A Testing of Courage

by Noah Andre Trudeau

[694 pages with Chapter Notes,
Bibliography, Index, and rosters of the
opposing armies with estimated battlefield
strength and losses, combined total of men
killed, wounded, missing, and captured.
Copyright 2002; Hardback \$34.95 or \$27.99
through the History Book Club.]

Reviewed by William C. Davis, an
author of over forty books and the Director
of Programs at the Virginia Center for Civil
War Studies, he believes Trudeau lived up
to the challenge to produce in a single
volume a fresh genuine overview of almost
35 years of new research on the central
Pennsylvania campaign.

Trudeau has reinterpreted the battle
using the most recent historical research
and personal firsthand accounts from
military leaders, foot soldiers, and
noncombatants from both sides. In
Trudeau's words this book synthesizes the
Gettysburg battle-book industry since the
last overall treatment by Edwin B.
Coddington's *The Gettysburg Campaign: A
Study in Command*.

I found Trudeau's narrative style
enjoyable and that opened up doors to
better comprehension to the more arcane
military politics operating behind the
scenes. This single volume on Gettysburg
and its extensive bibliography is worth
having in your library.

Submitted by J Courtway

Book Review by Walt Bittle

*The Real Lincoln – A New Look at
Abraham Lincoln, His Agenda,
and His Unnecessary War* by
Thomas J. DiLorenzo. Prima
Publishing, Roseville CA, 2002.

Wow! What a powerful
work. You can tell by the title
that the author is no fan of
Lincoln's. Some authors, like
Sandburg, set Lincoln on a
pedestal to be worshipped.
Others, like Donald, at least
attempt an unbiased look at the

man and his times. But DiLorenzo questions Lincoln's motives and methods with a vengeance – accusing Lincoln of actually causing a civil war with the dubious agenda of sacrificing the independence of the states to the supremacy of the federal government.

Disturbing in its ruthlessness, this book bothered me immensely as it both enlightened and educated. I found myself grinding my teeth in anger at some of the author's wild assertions, yet I had to respect his scholarship, research, and documentation.

You really must read this newly released book – perhaps in conjunction with *The South Was Right* by James and Walter Kennedy.

Movie Review

Kit Knight has written movie reviews since 1997 for newspapers in Sonoma County, Napa County and Sacramento County.

GODS & GENERALS is a movie that will appeal only to Civil War buffs. And not even all of them.

GODS & GENERALS is bloated enough to explode at a running time of 215 minutes. (And that isn't counting the 10 or 15-minute intermission.) Ninety-eight percent of theater-goers (including film critics) do not want to sit in a theater for four hours. That's a staggering time for a movie.

Ted Turner should have left the long version for his TV network and released an edited version for theaters.

This wanna-be epic presents the South as nothing less than noble. Never a peep is heard about the baser intent (i.e. to perpetuate slavery) and not a peep is heard about Southern graft. There were corrupt Southerners who made profits off the War Between the States by selling things to the army that didn't work or immediately fell apart.

For a movie as long as this one (did we really need to see Stonewall Jackson pray for 25 minutes?), key things were left out. We never see Robert E. Lee's family. We also never see or even hear of Jefferson Davis; he was only the president.

The actor playing Jeb Stuart wore the most stupid false beard I've ever seen. I was reminded of those fake beards we used to wear as children, the kind that hooked over our ears. Also, because the movie used so many Civil War re-enactors one comes away from the film believing the average rebel soldier was both well-fed and 45 or 50.

But because of those re-enactors, the attention to detail is flawless. The movie is historically accurate. Unfortunately, it isn't good.

GODS & GENERALS isn't a movie I'd recommend to anyone who isn't already a Civil War buff. In spite of the film's length, at least we can fill in the blanks for ourselves.

C.S.S. Alabama versus U.S.S. Kearsarge

The *USS Kearsarge* sank the *CSS Alabama* on June 19, 1864, after a 70-minute battle off the coast of France. Since its construction in England and furtive purchase by the Confederacy in August 1861, the *Alabama* had: sailed 75,000 miles as a “raider” (some say “pirate”); been at sea 534 of her 657 days; captured or sank 69 unarmed merchant vessels valued at \$6.5 million; taken 2000 prisoners; never visited a North American port; fought only one other battle against an armed opponent. That battle was with the antiquated, converted gunboat *U.S.S. Hatteras*, sunk near Galveston on January 11, 1863. This was an enviable record for a pirate ship, but not so for a war ship.

The *Alabama* (Captain Semmes) entered the Cherbourg harbor on June 11 for repairs and recoaling. Hearing of this the *Kearsarge* (Captain Winslow) blockaded the harbor; whereupon Semmes announced that he would fight his way out! The reasons for his decision to do battle are unclear, however, since the odds were rather good that the rebel vessel could easily have run out of the harbor on a dark and foggy night without an encounter. Was his act of bravado due to a troubled conscience, or was it for résumé enhancement purposes?

The table of comparison and photos show the many similarities between the two ships, but there were two significant differences unknown to Semmes at the time. The federal ship was retrofitted with chain link armor, and it had heavier guns. *Kearsarge's* 11-inch Dahlgren smooth bore cannons could fire a 190-pound ball with awesome power and reasonable accuracy over the 700 to 400 yd. range at which the battle was fought. Two other reasons that may also have contributed to the one-sidedness of the battle were the very poor marksmanship of the *Alabama's* international crew (though officered by Americans), as measured by number of shots fired (370) versus hits (38) and the possibly related gunpowder quality problems.

Semmes' later stated that the powder problems might have resulted from the ships' seawater-to-freshwater distillation device that vented some steam into the adjacent powder magazine. In other words, “He didn't keep his powder dry”. Or perhaps it because his powder had deteriorated over time for lack of use, since not much would have been needed to capture and burn unarmed ships.

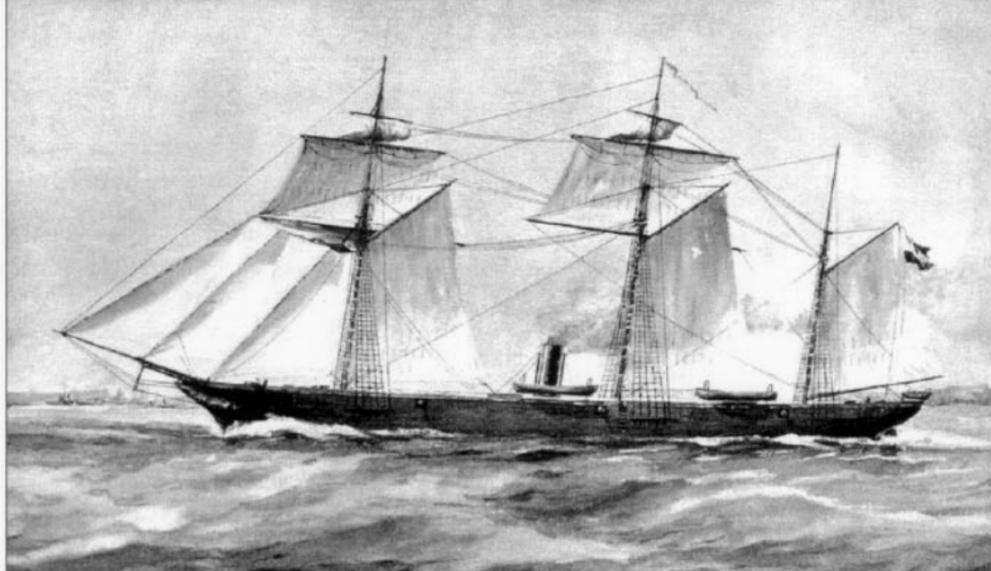
The *Kearsarge*, assisted by two harbor pilot boats, rescued most of the *Alabama's* surviving crewmembers and a few officers; while Semmes, most officers and a few crewmembers were rescued by the *Deerhound*, a private English steam yacht which carried them directly to England and permitting there escape. This latter act created considerable irate from Captain Winslow.

The Lincoln administration considered the *Kearsarge's* triumph a sweet moral and political victory over the British, who had built and armed the *Alabama*, as well as the Confederacy. Captain Winslow was voted the “Thanks of Congress” and was promoted to Commodore. He retired as Rear Admiral in 1873.

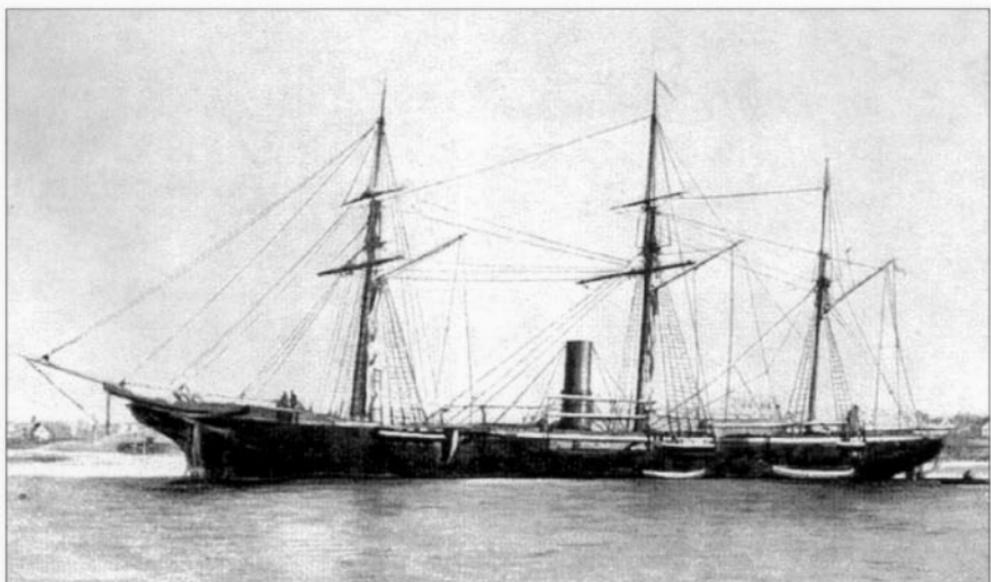
Captain Semmes also returned as a hero, notwithstanding that he had lost his ship. He was promoted to Rear Admiral and in February 1865 was given command of the CSA James River Squadron, consisting of the iron clads *Virginia II*, *Fredericksburg* and *Richmond*, plus escort gunboats. On the morning of April 3, upon the evacuation of the city of Richmond, he ordered the iron clads then in the vicinity of Drewry's Bluff eight miles down river to be blown up. Forming their crews as infantry units he joined Johnston's army in North Carolina. Upon surrendering, he signed his parole as Rear Admiral and Brigadier General, his final opportunity for résumé embellishment.

In December 1865, Raphael Semmes was imprisoned while Union authorities considered charging him with treason and piracy. This was not done, however, and he was released in April 1866. He became a lawyer.

Bob Williams: 3-07-03



C.S.S. Alabama



U.S.S. Kearsarge

U.S.S. Kearsarge and C.S.S. Alabama

A Comparison

<u>Item</u>	<u>Kearsarge</u>	<u>Alabama</u>
Type:	Steam Sloop	Steam Sloop
Built:	Portsmouth, Me. 1861	Liverpool, U. K. 1862
Tonnage:	1031	1050
Length, overall, ft.:	232	220
Length, at water line, ft.:	199	210
Beam, ft.:	33	32
Depth, ft.:	16½	17
Draft, ft.:	14	14
Engines, two each at:	400 h.p.	300 h.p.
Maximum speed, knots:	13	10
Armament:	7 guns: 2-11in. Dahlgren pivots, 1-30pdr rifle; 4-32pdr S.B.	8 guns: 1-68pdr pivot; 1-100pdr rifle pivot; 6-32pdr S.B.
Armor:	Iron chain sheets	None
Crew:	19 officers; 144 men	25 officers; 148 men
Captain:	John Winslow	Raphael Semmes
Executive Officer:	James Thornton	John Kell
Killed and wounded:	3w	26k, 21w
Shots fired: 6-19-1864	173	370

The Sacramento Civil War Round Table meets the last Wednesday of every month except November and December. (A meeting is held either at the end of Nov. or the beginning of Dec.) We meet at the Sizzler 2030 Fulton Ave. Sacramento, CA (Near Fulton and Cottage Way) at 7:00PM. Members and guests gather for food and conversation at 6:00PM. The Board of Directors meets at Carrows, 29th and J St. at 11:30AM to 1:00PM on the Wed. two weeks before the regular meeting for that month.

Battle Cry Editor

The Battle Cry is the monthly newsletter of the Sacramento CWRT. Please submit items to the editor for publication no later than the meeting day of the Board of Directors, either at that meeting, (see above) by U.S. mail or by e-mail. BattleCryEditor@aol.com Submissions are subject to availability of space and size limitations. Submissions do not necessarily reflect the views of the organization or the editor.

The official address of this organization is: Sacramento Civil War Round Table P.O. Box 254702 Sacramento, CA 95865-4702. <http://www.sacramentocwrt.org> is the web site address. Check it for past newsletter editions and information about the group.

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